

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1. A product information supply method for supplying a terminal of a user who desires to purchase a 5 product via a network with information about a related product that could be bought together with said product, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving combination information about combinations of products from a terminal of a person who 10 has bought the products, and making registration of said combination information with a database, so that the combination information can be accumulated; and

searching the database in response to inquiry information about the combination information from the 15 terminal of the user to supply the terminal of the user with corresponding combination information extracted from the database on the basis of the inquiry information.

2. The product information supply method 20 according to claim 1, wherein said inquiry information is a choice signal that indicates a product chosen at the terminal of the user in order to specify a candidate for purchase or place a buy order.

25 3. The product information supply method according to claim 1, wherein said inquiry information is sent from the terminal of the user.

4. The product information supply method according to claim 1, wherein said inquiry information is sent by the terminal of the user via a Web server that 5 provides an online shop that sells the products.

5. The product information supply method according to claim 1, further comprising a step of storing information concerning a number of times a purchase of the 10 related products have been made on the basis of the corresponding combination information supplied to the terminal of the user.

6. The product information supply method 15 according to claim 1, wherein:

the corresponding combination information includes information about a link to a Web page that introduces the related products into users; and

the method further comprises a step of storing 20 information concerning a number of times reference has been made to the Web page by the combination information.

7. The product information supply method according to claim 5 or 6, further comprising a step of 25 providing the person who has made registration of the combination information with a reward based on the number of times a purchase of the related products have been made

on the basis of the combination information registered by said person, or based on the number of times reference has been made to the Web page by the combination information.

5           8.       The product information supply method according to claim 5 or 6, further comprising a step of determining priority of supplying the user with the combination information on the basis of the number of times a purchase of the related products have been made on 10 the basis of the combination information, or based on the number of times reference has been made to the Web page by the corresponding combination information.

15           9.       The product information supply method according to claim 5 or 6, further comprising a step of providing, from a seller who sells the related products or an operating person who operates the Web site, a managing person who manages the database with a reward based on the number of times a purchase of the related products have 20 been made on the basis of the combination information registered by said person, or based on the number of times reference has been made to the Web page by the combination information.

25           10.      The product information supply method according to claim 1, wherein the combination information stored in the database is registered by an e-mail or a Web

page for making registration.

11. The product information supply method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

5 confirming that a buy order of a related product is placed on the basis of the corresponding combination information extracted from the database and sent to the user; and

10 sending an e-mail to the user terminal to ask the user to make registration of combination information to be stored in the database after a predetermined period lapses from confirmation.

12. The product information supply method according to claim 1, further comprising a step of producing marketing information from the combination information, the marketing information being sold to another person or organization.

20 13. A product information acquiring method for acquiring information about a related product that could be bought together with a product bought by a user who operates a terminal via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

25 sending inquiry information about combination information concerning a combination of the product and the related product to a server that manages a database

storing the combination information that has been registered by a person who has bought the product; and

5 outputting, from the server, corresponding combination information extracted from the database by search of the database based on the inquiry information.

14. The product information acquiring method according to claim 13, wherein said inquiry information is sent as a choice signal which indicates that a product was 10 chosen at the terminal of the user in order to specify a candidate for purchase or place a buy order.

15. The product information acquiring method according to claim 13, wherein said inquiry information is 15 sent by the terminal of the user via a Web server that provides an online shop that sells the products; and

20 said combination information is received by the terminal of the user via a Web server that provides an online shop that sells the products

16. The product information acquiring method according to claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

25 sending to the server a signal that places a buy order of a product on the basis of the combination information extracted from the database;

receiving, from the server, an e-mail that asks to make registration of combination information about said

product with the database after a predetermined period elapses from placement of the buy order; and

5 sending combination information including given items back to the server by an e-mail or access to a Web page for making registration of combination information described in said e-mail that asks to make registration.

17. The product information acquiring method according to claim 13, further comprising a step of 10 causing the user to receive a reward based on a number of times a purchase of a related product has been made or a number of times reference has been made to a Web page that introduces related products, when reference is made by another user to the combination information that has been 15 registered by said user that purchases at least one of the related products or reference is made to the Web page described in the combination information as link information.

20 18. A product information registering method for making registration of information about a related product that could be bought together with a product bought by a user who operates a terminal via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

25 entering given items of combination information by the terminal of the user by means of an e-mail or access to a Web page for making registration of combination

information; and

                  sending the given items of combination information to a server that manages a database for storing the combination information.

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19. The product information registering method according to claim 18, further comprising a step of causing the user to receive a reward based on a number of times a purchase of a related product has been made or a 10 number of times reference has been made to a Web page that introduces related products, when reference is made by another user to the combination information that has been registered by said user that purchases at least one of the related products or reference is made to the Web page 15 described in the combination information as link information.

20. A computer readable recording medium storing a program for supplying a user who operates a terminal to 20 purchases a product via a network, said program causing a computer to function as:

                  a database storing combination information about a product and a related product that could be bought together with said product;

25              registration making means for making registration of combination information that has been supplied by a person who has bought the product;

information outputting means for searching the database on the basis of inquiry information about the combination from the user and sending corresponding combination information extracted therefrom to the 5 terminal of the user; and

reward storing means for storing a value indicating a reward based on a number of times a purchase of a related product has been made or a number of times reference has been made to a Web page that introduces 10 related products, when reference is made by another user to the combination information that has been registered by said user that purchases at least one of the related products or reference is made to the Web page described in the combination information as link information.

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21. A product information supply apparatus supplying a user who operates a terminal to purchases a product via a network, said apparatus comprises:

a database storing combination information about a 20 product and a related product that could be bought together with said product;

registration making means for making registration of combination information that has been supplied by a person who has bought the product;

25 information outputting means for searching the database on the basis of inquiry information about the combination from the user and sending corresponding

combination information extracted therefrom to the terminal of the user; and

reward storing means for storing a value indicating a reward based on a number of times a purchase 5 of a related product has been made or a number of times reference has been made to a Web page that introduces related products, when reference is made by another user to the combination information that has been registered by said user that purchases at least one of the related 10 products or reference is made to the Web page described in the combination information as link information.